Retaining Veterinary Nurses

Veterinary nurses are essential to the veterinary team. In the past year, the professional standing of veterinary nurses has been elevated in the United Kingdom because they can only use that title if they are board-certified. However, despite strides in making the field more official, veterinary nurse pay is not commensurate with time commitment. Veterinary nurses worldwide frequently are overworked and undervalued. Though the profession may be gaining a higher profile, the author speaks to the ability to retain these talented individuals. Previous studies have shown that pay increases are only of temporary importance to job satisfaction, but surveys indicate this is an essential area of concern. Respect for veterinary nurses and an understanding of their contributions within practices is also needed to balance the significant hours they are expected to work. Changes must be made sooner rather than later if the growth of clinical veterinary medicine is to move forward smoothly.

Commentary

The research referenced in this article attempts to provide an evidence-based understanding of why veterinary nurses leave the profession. Veterinary nurses typically are not drawn to the profession because of high pay, but low pay may increasingly be a significant factor to consider to retain quality personnel. Work-life balance and recognition are additional elements that merit review.

As a human nurse, organizational coach, and consultant, these findings validate what I see and hear in veterinary practice environments. It would be my hope that this article motivates veterinary practice owners and managers to find ways to respond to factors that may lead veterinary nurses to leave a practice or the profession.—Sally Starbuck Stamp, RN, MC, BCC


Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, or leadership that encourages individuals to rise above personal interests, can inspire altruism in groups. The authors who studied the effect of this method on team communication concluded that leaders need to use their ideas to encourage action in followers and demonstrate behavior that can be emulated. Such efforts may even protect the team from bad actors within the ranks. To ensure that interactions remain positive and beneficial, leaders should also continually tailor their message for the team. Work meetings should be used not only to discuss issues but also to build team cohesion and purpose. Further work should help examine the broader nature of transformational leadership in other settings, workplaces, and demographics.

Commentary

Transformational leadership is a highly successful model that should be implemented in every veterinary practice. In the ideal form, the transformational leader provides the vision and triggers ideas and solutions among team members, thus creating leaders among followers. When the followers have generated ideas and solved problems, they are more likely to remain accountable for their actions and embrace the ideas generated by the team.—Heather Prendergast, RVT, CVPM